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AMERICA/COLOMBIA - With kidnappings and violence the FARC put negotiations at risk

Bogota (Agenzia Fides) - Two police officers kidnapped and clashes with government forces in the city of Policarpa in southern Colombia, with a toll of four soldiers killed: the end of the "ceasefire" proclaimed in November and suspended on January 20 by the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), is putting at risk the round of negotiations with the government, being held in Havana (Cuba). The FARC have publicly defended their "right to take prisoners of war."
According to Mgr. Hector Gutierrez Pabon, Bishop of Engativá and Secretary for the Communications Commission of the Episcopal Conference, while the country has eyes on Havana for peace talks, "with this announcement the guerrilla throws to the wind the illusions of reconciliation."
As reported to Fides, the news of further violence and kidnappings is, for the Bishop, "extremely disconcerting, because at the moment all the Colombians, after much effort, live in a spirit of peace, harmony and reconciliation." Mgr. Gutierrez remarks: "It is not sufficient to say, as the FARC do, that kidnapping does not involve civilians but aim at police and soldiers: they are also citizens, fathers, men who are providing a service to the nation." With such behavior, stresses the Bishop, human rights are damaged and "any hope of peace is buried." With regards to the future concerning negotiations between the government and the guerrillas, Mgr. Gutierrez calls on FARC to compare themselves with democratic elections: "If they truly have valid proposals to govern a country as difficult as ours, then they must enter into a context of democratic politics and participate in elections." (CE) (Agenzia Fides 01/02/2013)

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